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Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Summary

The present addendum contains information received after the deadline from the Economic Commission for Africa and the secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States.

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F. Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

Background

1. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was instrumental in the process that led to the creation of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Indeed, ECA had drafted the report that recommended the enlargement of economic cooperation in Central Africa beyond the then Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC) in 1983. Subsequently, ECA provided assistance to the nascent secretariat of the new institution and implemented the multisectoral project, funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on assistance to ECCAS from 1989 to 1993. From 1993, the political situation prevailing in Central Africa made it impossible for ECCAS to function and the advantages of the multisectoral project could not be capitalized upon. This stalemate lasted until 1998 when ECA was requested, through its Yaounde-based Subregional Development Centre, to help launch the process of revitalizing ECCAS. ECA prepared a report that was endorsed by the summit of heads of State and Government of ECCAS in Malabo in June 1999 and formed the basis for the ongoing ECCAS interim programme of work.

Recent developments

2. Cooperation between ECCAS and ECA gained momentum in 1998 following the adoption by the heads of State and Government of ECCAS of the Community Relaunching Plan established by the Commission. First, the Community, suffering from its very poor staffing and from the long period of lethargy from 1993 to 1998, sought ECA assistance in implementing its interim programme. Various missions to the Commission secretariat were undertaken by the Secretary-General of ECCAS in this respect. These missions resulted in ECA providing assistance to the Community in undertaking studies and technical expertise to the secretariat of ECCAS. It has been possible for ECCAS to attend ECA legislative organ meetings and other main events organized by the Commission. More recently, the secretariat of ECCAS announced its intention to take part actively in some of the activities of the Subregional Development Centre that are of great interest for the Community.

Core elements of ECA assistance to the secretariat of ECCAS

Project document for UNDP assistance request

3. The very first assistance ECA provided to ECCAS following the 1998 ECCAS summit was the preparation of a project document to request UNDP assistance to implement its interim plan. The project document had been completed and at the request of UNDP headquarters and was reviewed by a tripartite meeting involving ECA, ECCAS and UNDP in Libreville in October 2000. The revised version has been submitted to UNDP.

Specific studies

4. In 2000, at the request of ECCAS, ECA carried out two studies, the first on the establishment of a self-financing mechanism for ECCAS and the second on a compensation system for the revenue losses likely to result from the trade liberalization scheme. The results of the two studies were well received and approved by the Council of Ministers in Libreville in February 2001. Subsequently,

in February 2002, ECA produced a study on a trade liberalization scheme among the States members of ECCAS that defined the modalities of extending the then UDEAC trade provisions to those of ECCAS member States that were not members of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC). Request for further assistance in this area is expected, especially with regard to the harmonization of UDEAC trade provisions with similar provisions of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and provisions under the scheme of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), given that some of the non-CEMAC member States are also members of SADC or COMESA. A Committee comprising ECCAS, ECA, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the World Trade Organization will be set up to review that issue. The recent Summit of Heads of State and Government of ECCAS, held in Malabo in June 2002, approved the establishment of an ECCAS self-financing mechanism.

5. ECA assistance has recently been sought to study strategies for women and development. ECA has responded positively to the request. ECCAS has also informed ECA that: (i) a study on the establishment of the ECCAS Compensation Fund is currently being carried out; and (ii) the ECCAS secretariat is about to update its Protocols on Trade. ECA is expected to participate in the elaboration and implementation of those two actions.

Strengthening of the capacities of the secretariat of ECCAS

6. Through the Subregional Development Centre, ECA has been requested to assist ECCAS in its recruitment process by providing information on the technical expertise available within the Central Africa subregion and to assist in setting up the proper recruitment procedures. The Centre has agreed to establish the recruitment procedures, assisting in preparing job descriptions, vacancy announcements and in selecting and interviewing suitable candidates. It will also assist in the establishment of a databank of subregional experts in various fields.

7. Meanwhile, ECA continues to provide assistance to the ECCAS secretariat in the servicing of several meetings, the most recent being the Ministers' Meetings on the New Partnership for Africa's Development, organized by the Government of Gabon in Libreville in January and February 2002. ECA also provided assistance in developing the web site of the Community.

8. Finally, as a member of the committee on the winding up of ECCAS contentious matters, which had already met four times since its inception in 1998, ECA is reinforcing the capacities of the secretariat of ECCAS to expedite the exercise.

ECCAS involvement in ECA activities

9. Recently, ECCAS has expressed its willingness to support ECA activities. It participated in the preparatory activities for the African Development Forum III (ADF III) for the Central Africa subregion and attended the main event in Addis Ababa. It also provided invaluable input (in the form of data, participation in the meeting of the Steering Committee and comments) to the production of the first issue of the ECA Annual Report on Integration in Africa (ARIA).

10. ECCAS informed the Subregional Development Centre that it would contribute financially to one of the studies on transport infrastructures in Central Africa that the Centre is currently carrying out as preparatory work to the Forum on Transport Infrastructures in Central Africa, scheduled to take place in Yaounde in 2003.

11. In conclusion, it should be noted that the cooperation between ECA and ECCAS will be strengthened in the coming years. The signing of a memorandum of understanding will not only foster a period of effective partnership between ECA and ECCAS, but will also lead to sustained cooperation and development in the Central Africa subregion.

G. Secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States

12. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa financed and carried out a study with a view to enabling ECCAS to adapt to the changes that have occurred in the world. This study, entitled *Repenser le développement en Afrique Centrale*, deals with the identity of the subregion; the strategy and stages of integration in Central Africa; the reform of integration institutions; regional cooperation; the reform of staff rules; financing of the activities of integration institutions; and the programme to revive regional integration.

13. The secretariat has included the amendment to the Treaty in a project for assistance requested from UNDP. ECCAS is waiting for UNDP to provide the necessary means for carrying out this assistance (financing of studies, strengthening of the capacities of the secretariat).

14. ECCAS is continuing its contacts with the Dakar-based regional office of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme with a view to the signature by ECCAS of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

15. ECCAS has signed several financial-assistance agreements with its regional and international partners. Taking advantage of the opportunity offered by this move, ECCAS signed a protocol of agreement with the World Health Organization (WHO) enabling it to benefit from WHO assistance in combating the pandemics besetting the subregion, especially HIV/AIDS, the Ebola virus and malaria.

16. Similarly, a project to support preparation of the regional food-security programme for ECCAS member countries was signed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and ECCAS in the amount of $375,000.

17. Given the importance of this question of food security, the secretariat proposed a draft decision entrusting the Secretary-General with the mandate of pursuing its partnership with FAO with a view to finalizing the regional food-security programme of ECCAS.

18. Furthermore, relations between ECCAS and the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy will be governed by a memorandum which has been signed by the two parties.

19. This technical assistance takes the form of a partnership agreement between FAO and ECCAS for a programme to support preparation of the regional food-security programme for ECCAS member countries which are not members of CEMAC.

20. ECCAS, with financing from the United Nations Environment Programme, organized a regional consultation resulting in the adoption of three documents as Central Africa's contribution to the definition of a common African position, which were submitted to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in South Africa in August 2002.